

BODILY EXERCISE AND ITS PROFIT

July 8, 2015 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article)

The following is excerpted from *The Bible and Diet*, which examines God's will for man's diet by looking at 26 passages of Scripture that deal with the subject. It answers questions such as the following: Was Adam's diet a perfect diet? Is eating meat unhealthy? Were the restrictions against unclean animals in Leviticus for the purpose of health? Was Daniel a vegetarian? Did Daniel fast for health? Was Jesus a vegetarian? Is the New Testament believer under obligation to keep Old Testament diets? What place should exercise have in the Christian's life? Is there an advantage to taking vitamins and supplements? The book also warns about quack diets, describing 13 marks of quackery, including bogus science, unsubstantiated testimonials, and heretical interpretations of the Bible. It also warns about the occultic influence that has crept into the dietary field through "alternative health" practices. 117 pages, available in print and a free eBook edition from www.wayoflife.org

1 Timothy 4:8

"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

Here Paul addresses the priorities of life.

First, we learn that such things as bodily exercise and diet have some profit.

Eating a balanced diet has profit, and multitudes of studies have found that exercise is important for maintaining health. It has been said that "inactivity is life-limiting." The British government recommends that adults have five or more sessions of 30 minutes' moderate activity a week (e.g., brisk walking, swimming, cycling, stair climbing). The U.S. Centers for Disease Control makes the same recommendation (150 minutes of moderate exercise per week), and the CDC emphasizes that the exercise can be broken into 10 minute segments and aerobic exercise should be combined with some muscle-strengthening activities (e.g., weight lifting, resistance bands, push-ups, sit-ups). The American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association recommend 150 minutes per week of moderate intensity aerobic exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic exercise (e.g., running, tennis, jumping rope), and they say that shorter 10-minute workouts can be as beneficial as longer workouts.

Brisk aerobic exercise has consistently been found to have the potential to add years to one's life as well as "life to one's years," meaning it can increase good health into older age.

But we also see in 1 Timothy 4:8 such things as bodily exercise should not take precedence over godliness and should not become *the* priority in one's life.

To maintain the ideal “body mass index” and run marathons and maintain meticulous diets and research and follow “alternative health” programs requires a *major* commitment of time and energy in one’s brief earthly lifespan.

But Paul indicates that the commitment to such things should be “little,” and little is the opposite of large.

The fact that the pursuit of physical health and bodily exercise is so popular today at a nearly fanatical level in Western culture is evidence of the idolatry of this end-time society. It is a reflection of the self-worship that is described in Paul’s prophecy of the latter days (“men shall be lovers of their own selves,” 2 Timothy 3:1-2).

It is also a reflection of the temporal-mindedness of this generation. Men’s thoughts and affections are devoted to this present life.

The fact that so many believers ape the world in these things does not make it right.

Consider Paul’s exhortation:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:1-4).

After His resurrection, Christ emphasized that His will for this present age is for His people to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature and establish sound churches for the discipling of believers. This is repeated five times in Scripture (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). Since this is what Christ emphasized, this should be the priority of every child of God. It is a very big task, which is nowhere near being fulfilled. Literally billions of people have not heard a clear and sound presentation of the gospel. Multitudes of those who profess Christ do not themselves know the gospel. *Every* believer is an ambassador of Christ in this great work (2 Cor. 5:20). It is a major part of our calling as a child of God.

How can God be pleased when His people spend the bulk of their time, energy, and money on the physical and temporal to the neglect of the spiritual and eternal?

George Malkmus is an example of a professing Christian who has gotten sidetracked from proper biblical priorities.

“Malkmus was pastor of a Baptist church in upstate New York in 1976 when he says a chiropractor told him he had developed a cancerous tumor in his colon. Malkmus says he could feel the tumor underneath his rib cage and found blood in his stool. But having watched his mother die of colon cancer after repeated rounds of chemotherapy and radiation, Malkmus, then 42, avoided the medical route.

“Instead, he sought out a Texas evangelist named Lester Roloff who had a reputation as a ‘health nut.’ Roloff recommended a strict raw fruit and vegetable diet, including one to two quarts of fresh carrot juice each day. [Note from Bro. Cloud: Lester Roloff was not a vegetarian.]

“Malkmus resigned from his church and devoted himself to health and healing. Within a year, Malkmus claims, his tumor was gone--and so were his allergies, his hemorrhoids and his dandruff.

“He began a journey into the counterculture world of alternative health, becoming an organic gardener for the Shangri-La Health Resort in Bonita Springs, Fla., and a few years later bought 50 acres of mountain land in Tennessee, where he lived as self-sufficiently as he could. He pumped water from a spring and used a compost instead of a flush toilet. ...

“But in 1992, Malkmus bought a small restaurant in Rogersville, Tenn., and started selling fresh juice and salads. The restaurant was an instant success, and in time, people began listening to Malkmus’ message and buying his books, and his ministry began growing” (Yonat Shimron, “The Hallelujah Diet: Miracle Cure or Just a Veggie Tale”? *Raleigh News & Observer*, Raleigh, NC, cited from *The Baptist Standard*, May 26, 1999).

Here is the case of a pastor who got so wrapped up in the pursuit of health that he quit the pastorate and put his full-time energies into diet. There is nothing “little” about this man’s commitment to “bodily” things. He serves the “gospel of good health” more than the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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